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Language, Truth And Logic (Dover Books On Western Philosophy)



Synopsis

"A delightful book – I should like to have written it myself." – Bertrand Russell
First published in 1936, this first full-length presentation in English of the Logical Positivism of Carnap, Neurath, and others has gone through many printings to become a classic of thought and communication. It not only surveys one of the most important areas of modern thought; it also shows the confusion that arises from imperfect understanding of the uses of language. A first-rate antidote for fuzzy thought and muddled writing, this remarkable book has helped philosophers, writers, speakers, teachers, students, and general readers alike. Mr. Ayers sets up specific tests by which you can easily evaluate statements of ideas. You will also learn how to distinguish ideas that cannot be verified by experience – those expressing religious, moral, or aesthetic experience, those expounding theological or metaphysical doctrine, and those dealing with a priori truth. The basic thesis of this work is that philosophy should not squander its energies upon the unknowable, but should perform its proper function in criticism and analysis.

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Customer Reviews

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Sir Alfred Ayer caused a furore with the publication of his *LANGUAGE, TRUTH & LOGIC* in 1936, when he was only 24. From 1959 until 1978 he was Wykeham Professor of Logic at the University of Oxford. He died in 1989. Ben Rogers is the author of *A. J. AYER: A LIFE* (Chatto & Windus 1999, Vintage 2000). --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Language, Truth and Logic is an audacious book, written when Ayer was 26. It is not the sort of book that would be written by a philosopher at 56 or even 36. But at 26 you can still convince yourself that your position is right even as all of the great philosophers of history are wrong (or at least mislead and mistaken). This is the theme and tone of Ayer's audacious book. The appeal of the book to undergraduates is great. I use it at the very beginning of a course I teach in the history of Analytic Movement in philosophy, and it is a good beginning for that study. I would recommend it to anyone with even a casual interest in Twentieth Century Philosophy.

There is no better single source of doing philosophy via the logical positivism method than by reading this book. It's really two books in one. The Introduction is a rather thorough reply to his critics of the book's original lengthier substance, and if nothing else is read, the Introduction provides an excellent example of what logical positivism is, why it is regarded highly or poorly depending on the reader, and why some people think this kind of analysis defeats the whole purpose of philosophy. The book does try to end metaphysics as we know it, but in the course of establishing new principles (i.e., verifiability), it itself becomes indefensible against the accusation of itself relying on its own premises to prove its own conclusions (a charge Ayer coyly ignores), otherwise known as circularity. The fact that many Anglo-American philosophers still do philosophy in this manner -- after Ayer's style -- is reason alone to study this book thoroughly. It is concisely written, clear and unambiguous (if not a tad bit too analytical), and exemplary of Anglo-American style of doing philosophy. I don't think too many philosophers subscribe to its own circular

metaphysics, but many, if not most, current philosophers adopt its principles as a "method" -- something which Ayer later (in "The Meaning of Life") claims was his aim all along. What is disappointing to me, at least in the body of Ayer's works read thus far, is his failure to address "verifiability" in light of Popper's "falsification" doctrine. What exactly constitutes "verifiability" or empirical truth? And, how does the verification of empirical truth differ from the "empirical falsification" of Popper? Perhaps Ayer addresses this problem somewhere, but I've not found it. It would be an interesting problem to see solved.

Should be required reading in all colleges. Teaches the fallacy of making portentous-sounding statements that delight the ideologue but mean absolutely nothing.

Quick read for anyone interested in philosophy, the logic of language, and logic in general. Witty, nearly comedic, and young at heart.

So you want to know how smart AJ Ayer is. He once made world boxing champion Mike Tyson back down by telling him that he, AJ Ayer, was the world champion philosopher. You have to be smart and love language to want this book. It seems hard at first but it's liberating. Once you understand it you you will have ways of seeing and understanding things that are beyond most people.

Ayer is the most important figure of Logical Positivism in English-Speaking world. This book explains what Logical Positivism is and how it works. The book is now a classic in the analytic tradition. You can find useful information from this book.

I'll give 5 stars to any book that profoundly changes the way I think, and this one did. For one, I interpret the "meaningfulness" of statements differently now. I believe that a lot of what people say, myself included, is "literally senseless." I'm just a casual philosopher, and I know Ayer's ideas were disputed and refuted, but I think they have some value. How much, I cannot say. It's a fun book to read casually and feel all philosophically cocky, because that's the way it seems to be written: arrogantly yet audaciously.

The logical analysis of Ayer is brilliant, and it is always a pleasure to read his neat prose. It helps to find out how much fundamental weakness is there in the arguments and assumptions of many religious and non religious books.

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